

**“The approval of this burial request is a solid step in the journey of Hmong recognition, which began with the Executive Order President Ford signed, allowing for the resettling of thousands of Hmong in the United States after the war,”** wrote the bipartisan coalition.

After delivering the letter, Congressman Costa released the following statement:

**“I believe the Secretary of the Army has made a poor decision in rejecting the burial waiver requested by the family and supporters of General Vang Pao and the entire Hmong-American community.”**

#### Background

Major General Vang Pao led the Royal Lao Army during the Secret War in Laos, fighting against the People's Army of Vietnam in cooperation with the CIA and United States military forces. These forces numbered in the tens of thousands and conducted direct missions against Communist forces and North Vietnamese supporters. Bravely leading thousands of soldiers in a guerilla war, Vang Pao became a hero due to his leadership and dedication.

Immigrating to the United States in May of 1975, Major General Vang Pao was instrumental in negotiating the resettlement of thousands of his fellow Hmong. Vang Pao continued his leadership after his exit from military service. He was active in fostering US-Lao relations, and combating human rights abuses abroad. The General passed away Thursday January 6th after a battle with pneumonia.

On February 4, 2010, Secretary McHugh rejected the burial waiver requested by the family and supporters of General Vang Pao. In his role as Commander in Chief, the President is able to overturn the Secretary's decision to reject the waiver.

According to a report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office, between 1967 and 1998, 113 individuals without military service were approved for Arlington burial, out of a documented 156 requests. The total number of approvals during this time period was 196, out of 340 total requests. The Clinton administration overruled the Army Assistant Secretary's denial recommendation at least 12 times during his 2 terms.